

Appreciations*

The principles of motivation, plus 25 specific, creative ideas for appreciating, motivating, and inspiring for powerful retention

From Carla Cross, CRB, MA

Wildly paraphrasing Maxwell Maltz, the author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*:

“We won’t take a risk without a rise in self-esteem.”

In other words, if we want our agents to wade into the battle of sales, take all those objections, and keep on going, we have to frequently and consistently take actions to raise their self-esteem. This is especially true in challenging markets.

Reward the Behaviors We Want

Why do we appreciate? *To reinforce the behavior we want.*

Psychological behavioral principle: *Behavior that’s rewarded is repeated.*

Think of how people raise their children. Some parents only speak to their children to reprimand them. What happens? The children repeat the bad behavior to get attention.

So, we must be careful what we appreciate. Too often, we pay attention to the wrong behaviors, and thus get more of them!



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Why 'appreciation'?

Why do I term this document "appreciation" instead of recognition? Because appreciation covers more ground. We can appreciate efforts without making a huge 'deal' of it. I think a person's greatest need is for appreciation, not really recognition.

Categories of appreciation:

Recognition
Thankfulness
Courtesy
Inclusion
Inspiration

The Principles of Appreciation

Appreciate frequently. (Most managers fail to appreciate nearly enough).

Appreciate consistently. (Remember the marketing principles of 'frequency and consistency'? They apply big time to recognition).

Stop merely appreciating the top producer. Expand your recognition way past 'top producer' and top money makers. (Remember that truism 'behavior that's rewarded is repeated?').

Remember what people work for (security, prestige, recognition, accomplishment, power). Choose the right recognition or appreciation to suit a specific person's needs. For example: A new agent struggling to overcome objections in the first month: Reward lead generation (not sales). Sales is the last action in the 'sales cycle' sequence. Waiting to reward that merely de-motivates the person from trying.

To create recognition, relate to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (The person worried about security won't respond if you try to reward her for team play).



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Different strokes for different folks. Create reward/recognition congruent with the behavioral style of the individual. The highly aggressive salesperson will happily get up in front of thousands. The shy, introverted computer geek will not. Using the wrong type of appreciation actually de-motivates!

Check that recognition is win/win. This is huge. So many times, when someone creates a recognition program, everyone loses except the one winner. That's how you de-motivate hundreds or thousands!

Recognize activity levels for new agents (numbers of sales calls).

Make recognition as immediate as possible. (That's why those long contests don't work).

Don't build a contest where everyone in your office already knows who the winners will be—that's a huge de-motivator to 98% of the people in your office who will not win. They won't even play the game!

Build team spirit, not 'stack the deck' competition. In a good contest, people are paired with others so that there are peer leaders inspiring others to 'keep on keeping on'. Never, never pitch one team against another when the teams are not well-matched.

Build lots of little, immediate recognitions—much more important than one big one (funny cards, voice mails, emails, telling someone else that the person did a good job).

Figure out who you may be de-motivating with a poor recognition plan. For example, if you regularly only recognize the top listing agent, how does that de-motivate your good listing agents who never win?

Recognize supportive behavior as well as productive behavior. If you're always only recognizing your high aggressive individuals, you're leaving out lots of valuable team players in your office!

Recognize ethics, quality, heroism, customer service—whatever you have in your mission and vision statement.



Recognize unique talents that have been contributed for the good of the team. For example, do you have someone who always takes pictures at an event? Recognize that person.

Recognize plateaus of growth.

Make your recognition plan a part of your Agent Development System, a part of your marketing plan/business plan.

Teach others to recognize and reward themselves fully for their efforts.

Appreciate and recognize very often. Don't wait until something big happens. Studies show that small, immediate appreciations do much more to reinforce the behaviors you want than one big event.

A New Coaching Concept: Leadership by the Month



If you're a typical manager, you're doing too many things at once! Why not get inspired, get motivated, and get real leadership actions to put into place every month? It's fun, it's profit-making, and it's energizing. Check it out at <http://365leadership.net>. Next series begins Jan. 2012. Don't miss out!

More Support

Check out Carla's blogs:

Management in a Minute Up to the minute management tips

Up and Running in 30 Days Tips, encouragement, and motivation for your newer and challenged agents

Want more information on how Carla can assist you and your company? Contact her at Carla@carlacross.com or 425-392-6914. She is here to support your leadership.



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Specific Creative Methods to Appreciate and Recognize

1. Do 'third party' recognition: Tell someone that "George" did a great job on that..... Don't worry. It will get back to George. This is so powerful it's almost scary—your ability to affect George's success just by telling someone else he did a good job! And, this powerful motivational tool is so little used it is scary, too.
2. Recognize someone even if that person wasn't a huge contributor—if you want a huge contribution later. Once a mortgage rep gave me a bud vase as a 'thanks' for my contributions to her company. Boy, was I surprised (and I remembered it all these years!). I hadn't done much for her, but I sure did from that time on!
3. Arrange for one of your agents to go to lunch with the president of the company (if you're not the president of the company).
4. Bring out some leadership qualities in someone, even if you haven't seen them yet. For example, Helen is a broker, but not very productive. I put her in charge of a POD—a 3-person group I called *Persons of Determination*. (These people are working through my *Up and Running in 30 Days* program). Helen is thriving with this leadership responsibility, and is taking charge. Her self-esteem is soaring.
5. Recognize each person's contribution in writing. Create form letters for your advisory group, for your peer coaches, etc. Schedule them for the year in your contact management so you don't forget to use them.
6. Read your after sale surveys in each of your meetings.
7. Make a "Book of Greatness" in your entry. Use testimonials from your agents (that's why you need to send those after sale surveys out regularly).
8. Buy greeting cards and hand out at least 1 a day. Your agents will keep them on their desks forever!



9. Do an all voice-mail broadcast to acknowledge someone's great contribution.
10. In each of your sales meetings, honor all those whose listings sold and who made sales—as well as new listings.
11. Take someone to lunch each week until you have taken each of your agents to lunch—just because (they will first think something is wrong!)
12. Ask an agent to be a 'senior mentor' for a struggling agent. Allow the struggling agent to 'shadow' the senior mentor on a listing presentation or offer presentation.
13. Ask an agent to provide a 'Motivational Moment' during your sales meeting. (This is great for your agents who may be in Toastmasters).
14. At Christmas, write a letter to spouses to acknowledge their contributions. (Some will be really, really surprised, and all will be really, really happy you remembered their sacrifices!).
15. Recognize your agents on their anniversaries with you (and your staff). Recognize them in front of their peers, and in writing. Put a 'blurb' in your company newsletter.
16. Recognize your agents when they have attained certain thresholds of production (like when they go to 100%). Recognize them in front of their peers, in a letter, and in your company newsletter.
17. Recognize your agents on their birthdays. Buy birthday cards and have your staff remind you to complete one. Recognize the agent's birthday in your meeting.
18. Your staff: Bring flowers to your staff 'just because', to thank them for extra effort, etc.



19. Put flowers on your agent's desk with a thank you card.
20. Send/bring a bouquet of cookies and put it on an agent's desk with a thank you note.
21. Make a huge poster and put in your entry to thank someone for going the 'extra route'.
22. Ask one of your great producers to take the time to recognize the efforts of one of your newer agents. That will make their day, week, and year!
23. Find out, when you hire a person, their background, talents, and skills. Arrange for some 'contributions' from them early in their careers. That will boost their self-esteem tremendously.
24. Ask your staff to recognize agents' efforts every day. Make that recognition a part of your staff accountability plan.
25. Find methods to get someone to recognize *your* efforts! You are the leader, but you need and deserve appreciation and recognition too. The good news: When you become a master Appreciator, you will find you get appreciated much more often, too.

Tip to general/sales managers:

Brainstorm appreciations with your leadership group. Publish. Brainstorm appreciations with your agents for their clients. Publish.



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